



The Rail Gunner Monthly

VOLUME 2

THE RAIL GUNNER MONTHLY

ISSUE 7

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The Rail Gunner



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41st Fires Brigade

"Rail Gunners!!"



Photo by Spc. Dalinda Hanna, 41st Fires Brigade PAO

Pvt. Rolando Manilili, from Yigo, Guam, and a forward observer for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, and Sgt. Nathan McElroy, originally from Gainesville, and a topographical analyst for HHB, 41st Fires Bde., walk quickly as a buddy team during their 26.2-mile ruck march on the tank trail, Feb. 23. The Soldiers are practicing for the 22nd annual Bataan Memorial Death March scheduled at White Sands Missile Range, N.M. in honor of the service members who were forced to march 60 miles in deplorable conditions while protecting the Philippines in World War II.

Rail Gunners trek through White Sands

Story and photos by
Spc. Dalinda Hanna
41st Fires Brigade, PAO

Ten Rail Gunner Soldiers put on 40-pound rucksacks and started out on a 26.2-mile trek across the white sands of New Mexico for the 22nd annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., March 25.

The 41st Fires Brigade sent a five-person co-ed team, and five individual walkers to participate in the historic march. The 26.2-mile foot march was held in honor of the 75,000 service members who were forced to march 60 miles in deplorable conditions while defending the Philippine island during World War II.

RAIL GUNNER 6 & 9 SEND



Colonel
John C. Thomson, III
41st Fires Brigade

Dear Rail Gunner Family:

Like you, CSM Hughes and I remain extremely proud of the Soldiers and Families of the Rail Gunner brigade. While we do not have deployment orders, we remain a highly trained and ready formation, ready to respond on moment's notice to fight and win our Nation's wars. Our teammates continue to excel in numerous endeavors including the recent Bataan Memorial Death March, the Austin Marathon, the Army Maintenance Excellence competition, Salute Battery and the U.S. Army Culinary Arts competition. This is a testament to the outstanding dedication and professionalism of our entire team, and we thank each and every one of you that contribute so much to our success.

The month of April offers several great opportunities for fun and relaxation with friends and Family. In conjunction with Easter, there is a four-day weekend April 22-25. The Lieutenant Dan Band, featuring Gary Sinise, is performing free of charge

at Abrams Gym on April 16th. Our parent headquarters, the 1st Cavalry Division, is holding its Farewell and Casing Ceremony on April 15th at 4:00 p.m. on Cooper Field. The event will include a Cavalry Charge and will be followed by a reception that is open for Families. Additionally, the Fort Hood Military Child Fest will be held on April 29th from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. featuring fun, food, live entertainment, and games.

The personal time and compassion our Soldiers and Family members give in the spirit of volunteerism continues to be simply amazing. Whether it is serving on Family Readiness Groups, coaching youth sports, or supporting good causes like the Relay for Life, our Soldiers and Families are always out there contributing to keep Fort Hood and Central Texas the "Great Place". This year's National Volunteer Week is April 10-16, 2011. The theme, "Celebrating People in Action", is a fitting description for our phenomenal volunteers. Everyone is welcome to join us at Club Hood on April 13th at 6:00 p.m. as we recognize the many volunteers and supporters of the Rail Gunner Family.

Another special event occurring this month is the second annual Brigadier General Charles B. Allen Memorial Bass Classic. The Rail Gunner Chapter of the US Field Artillery Association is hosting this tournament on April 9th at Stillhouse Hollow Lake in honor of the late BG "Ben" Allen, namesake of our Brigade Headquarters building. A dedicated and caring leader, General Allen commanded the 4th Infantry Division Artillery here at Fort Hood from June 2000 to June 2002, and then tragically lost his life with six other great American heroes on November 29, 2004 in a helicopter crash while serving as the Deputy Commanding Gen-



Command Sergeant Major
Kelvin Hughes
41st Fires Brigade CSM

eral of the 4th Infantry Division. Everyone is encouraged to join us in honoring his legacy as a tremendous leader, Soldier, Redleg and sportsman. Even if you do not care to fish, the weigh-in will be at 3:00 p.m. at Dana Peak Park (Comanche Pavilion) and is sure to be a lot of fun.

We recently welcomed our sixth embedded Military Family Life Counselor, Albert Bell, to the Rail Gunner Family. He replaces Gregg Kimble who served us very well over the past six months. We encourage you to invite Albert to your FRG meetings, social gatherings, or other events. He is available to all Soldiers and Family members and can be contacted on his cell phone, 254-317-3515.

In closing, CSM Hughes and I thank our magnificent Soldiers and wonderful Army Families for all you do every single day. Keep up the great efforts and please be safe -- you make us

Rail Gunner Strong!

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BATAAN cont. from Page 1



Pvt. Rolando Manilili (left) and Sgt. Nathan McElroy, finish their 22-mile ruck march. Ten Rail Gunner Soldiers are practicing for the 22nd annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, N.M.

While everyone on the team had different reasons for volunteering, the Soldiers wanted to pay their respects by participating and remembering the sacrifices that were made by the service men during the tragic event.

Maj. Raymond Jones, of Glenrose, Texas, the operations officer for 41st Fires Bde., volunteered for the event to honor his great uncle who was a survivor of the 1942 march. Jones said that he pays tribute to all of their sacrifices, and he completed the memorial march once in 2008.

"'Uncle Punchy' had a broken back and they dragged him along as much as they could because he was still alive, but he eventually fell off beside the road," said Jones. "The Japanese missed bayoneting him when they were going through the survivors on the road and local Philippine guerrilla fighters were able to take him to a cave

and nurse him back to health for the next two or three years. When Gen. MacArthur liberated the Philippines, they were able to take him out of the cave, and he eventually learned to walk again."

The Rail Gunners started practicing in January in preparation for the death march. The team met twice a week and slowly increased their distance to build strength and stamina. The Soldiers who have completed the march offered tips to the newest team members.

Sgt. 1st Class Giovanni Flores, from Laredo, Texas, has completed the memorial march, and even after two back surgeries and a foot injury, volunteered to support his team and offered advice.

"We don't participate for money or fame," said Flores. "It is all about personal pride and trying to feel what the WWII Soldiers went through. This march isn't easy by any means but making it across that finish line lies on a Soldier's drive and technique. You have to take care of your feet, keep your back straight, and use your abdominal muscles. Don't let the weight take you and keep marching forward."

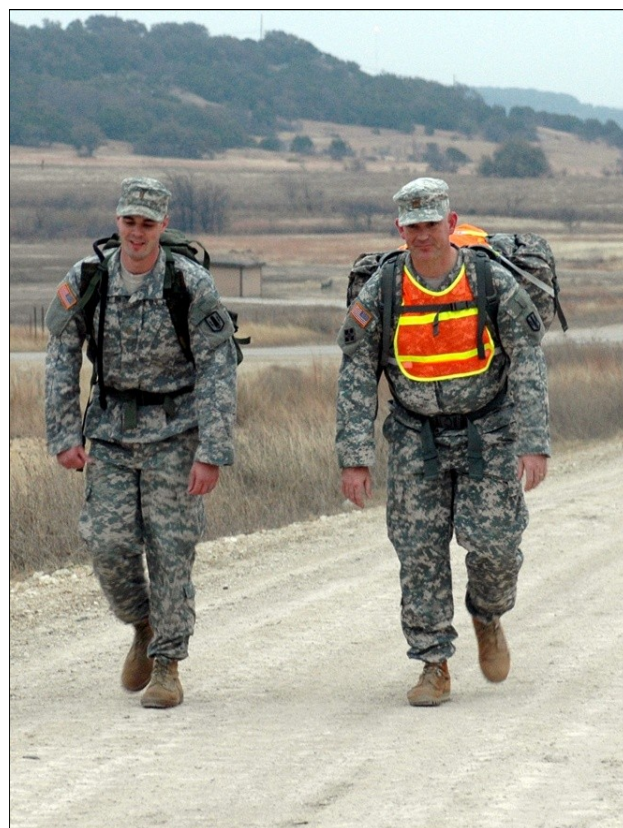
Pvt. Rolando Manalili, a native of Yigo, Guam, and a forward observer for HHB, 41st Fires Bde., is new to the event and was excited to go because the event is meaningful to his family.

"It was exciting to go to New Mexico and be a

part of this event with thousands of people," said Manalili. "I am a Filipino, and I can tell my family and friends that I participated in the Bataan Death March. The march was tough, and it was extremely hot out. Our training helped us to push ourselves to the end."

The Rail Gunner team completed the Bataan Death March in 11th place out of 24 teams that actually completed the foot march.

"Our hard work definitely showed out there," said Flores. We all were hot and tired and there were times that we wanted to quit, but we had to remember why we were doing this march. "We all agreed that quitting wasn't an option, and we were going to push ourselves to the finish line."



Maj. Raymond Jones (right) and 2nd Lt. Nicholas Hughes focus on the walk during their 22-mile ruck march. The Soldiers are practicing for the 22nd annual Bataan Memorial Death March, which is a 26.2-mile ruck march at White Sands Missile Range, N.M.

Rail Gunners conduct HCLOS training

Story and photos by
Spc. Dalinda Hanna
41st Fires Brigade, PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas—Satellite communications specialist and noncommissioned officers throughout the 41st Fires Brigade took part in the High Capacity Line-of-Site (HCLOS) certification training at the General Dynamic G4 Training Center located on Fort Hood, Texas, Feb. 23-25.

The Soldiers were instructed on how to connect, operate, and troubleshoot errors on the HCLOS equipment. The Rail Gunner Soldiers are preparing themselves for equipment operations necessary in all environments; whether it's in the field or in a deployment environment.

Carrie Carroll, a native of Sharon, Pa., and a military technical trainer for General Dynamics said that the training is necessary to ensure the units have enough operators to cover 24-hour shifts, and the HCLOS use is a vital part in how units talk to each other on the battlefield.

"HCLOS provides the point-to-point way to pass secure data. The units will be able to access the internet, send emails, and make phone calls within the network," said Carroll. "Radio communications has been available for a while, but equipment has molded and changed to meet the Army's needs over the years."

The training offered by General Dynamics is different than other HCLOS training offered elsewhere. The Soldiers who train with General Dynamics train on real-world equipment that is ready to transmit and receive information. Other training environments use mock equipment that will not allow users to test their equipment in battlefield scenarios or give feedback.

Spc. Mark Schallberg, from

41st Fires Bde. said, "learning this equipment is important to do my job."

"Having functional equipment is a different experience because it allows you to see the process from start to finish and gives me immediate feedback to about whether I'm doing my job correctly," said Schallberg.

Cross-training with Soldiers who have used the HCLOS equipment before is beneficial to new users since they can work together and answer questions about specific functions and operations in an actual training or field environment.

Spc. Gary Bendall, originally from Prince George, Va., and a signal support specialist for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 589th Brigade Support Battalion, 41st Fires Bde., has never used the equipment and said that he is learning a lot.

"I will be an alternate operator when I use the system; so I will need to know how to start it up, get it aligned, and how to connect it to the command post operations node," said Bendall.

Effective training is imperative to successful field operations. The Rail Gunner Soldiers, both new users and experienced, are learning effective skills that will be a big part in providing essential communications in the field or in a theatre of operations somewhere in the world. After the certification process, the Soldiers will leave with a newfound knowledge of how to connect, operate, and maintain the HCLOS anywhere they may go.



Spc. Daniel Westwood, a multi-channel transmissions system operator maintainer for 324th Network Support Company, 41st Fires Brigade, and Spc. Nicholas Borrego, a multi-channel transmissions system operator maintainer for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Bde., operates the command post node during the hands-on portion of the HCLOS certification training at the General Dynamic G4 training center, on Fort Hood, Texas. Rail Gunner Soldiers learned how to connect, operate, maintain, and repair the HCLOS equipment.

River Falls, Wis., and a multi-channel transmissions system operator maintainer for 324th Network Support Company,

Live strong, run strong, Army Strong

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Kyle Richardson
41st Fires Brigade, PAO

AUSTIN, Texas—Running has been an Army tradition for many years. In upholding tradition, several Rail Gunners hit the streets of Austin to take Army Strong and running to a higher level.

Twenty-five Deep Strike Soldiers from Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regi-



AUSTIN, Texas—Staff Sgt. Danny Bishop, with Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, shows his heart at the 600 meter mark during the Live Strong Austin Marathon. Bishop completed one of the nation's biggest marathons in 5 hours, 3 minutes, 55 seconds.

ment, 41st Fires Brigade, participated in the 20th annual Austin Marathon, Feb. 20. This marathon marked the third year in partnership with the Live Strong organization, a non-profit organization devoted to cancer research and awareness.

With the Texas weather on its best behavior and the wind at the runners' backs, more than 20,000 participants ran across the start line promptly at 7 a.m.

Deep Strike Soldiers trained long and hard to prepare for one of the toughest runs of their lives. These runners had a difficult 26.2 miles ahead them, as the first 17 miles were laden with varying degrees of hills.

"I didn't know what to expect, but we trained hard," said Cpl. Joseph Houde, a St. Johnsbury, Vt. native. "It's pretty exciting to run in a marathon. Not many people can say that they've done this."

The Deep Strike Soldiers tried to offset some of the pain of the marathon by training hard for several months.

"We were looking at our physical fitness training calendar, and we wanted to have an event to bring the unit closer and increase the unit's PT average," said 1st Sgt. Anthony Iglehart. "We like to train hard and play hard so why not a marathon. One of the NCOs put the team and training together and, shortly after, the Austin marathon became our culminating event."

Every Soldier came out to run for one reason or another, but the biggest reason was team support and esprit de corps.

"This whole process has been a great team building experience," said Iglehart. "Even from the Soldiers who are not

running, a lot of them helped set up traffic control points during our prep runs all throughout central Texas. I'm excited for my guys; this shows their heart and commitment to each other, the team, and their task hand at hand."

"This is my first and last marathon," said Pvt. Charles Galendez, Yigo, a Guam native. "I feel excited and nervous at the same time. This 26.2 miles is nothing nice and it might get the best of me. I've been running nonstop to prepare for this marathon, but I'm glad that I'm out here. How many young people can say that they've done a full marathon?"

The Deep Strike Soldiers also enlisted a spouse to run in the 5k race.

"I'm here to support my husband and his unit," said Anh Vandiver, married to Staff Sgt. Keith Vandiver. "It takes a lot of commitment to compete. Every Sunday I'm out there with my husband and his guys. I'm proud of them all. It shows a lot of heart. But most importantly, we're also doing this run on behalf of his stepmother, who just passed away this year from cancer."

The team's goal wasn't to come in first place but to come out as a team and push each to overcome a seemingly impossible obstacle. Across the flats and over the rolling hills, Deep Strike accomplished that task.

Staff Sgt. Guy Martinez was the first Deep Strike Soldier to cross the finish line with a time of 4 hours, 11 minutes, 37 sec-

Training for close-quarters fighting

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Kyle Richardson
41st Fires Brigade, PAO

FORT HOOD, Texas—The Army combatives program is more than competing in an eight-sided ring and more than opponents attempting to pass each other's guard to get a full mount. The program is designed to train Soldiers on how to remain calm and focused in close-quarter combat.

Deep Strike level three and four trainers kick-off the unit's newly developed 80-hour combatives program with 13 level one certified participants at the Starker Gym located on Fort



Spc. Dustin Weddle (bottom) with 67th Forward Support Company, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, attempts to roll Pfc. Ryan Herold with 67th FSC, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt., during Deep Strike's level two combatives certification training. The Soldiers will be able to train other Soldiers back in their units after their



Sgt. 1st Class James Platt (bottom), level four trainer for Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, runs through a drill with Spc. Christopher Baldwin, level three trainer for Btry. C, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt., during the fourth day of Deep Strike's level two combatives course certification training held at the Starker Gym, Fort Hood, Texas. Platt demonstrated the proper movements involved in the move called the elevator from the bottom position.

Hood, Texas from Feb. 28 to March 11.

The trainers from Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade molded their tactical combatives program, also known as level two, in a train the trainer class to emulate the basic concepts of the Army combatives program and in accordance with FM 3-25.150.

"According to AR 350-1 and the combatives regulation, the Department of the Army requires all Soldiers to be level one qualified," said Sgt. 1st Class James Platt, Tulsa, Okla. native, the Fires Platoon sergeant, Btry. C, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt.

Platt, who is level four certified, said that they do an intense physical fitness session in the morning to tire out their

Soldiers for class.

"You have to constantly think, plan, and be ready no matter what. You never know when you're in a close-quarter situation and you have to defend yourself. We try to instill technique and skills in our Soldiers that will allow them to remain calm during stressful situations. It's easy to talk tough; but once you're touched or taken to the ground, you never know what you're going to do."

"Every Soldier comes from different walks of life," said 1st Sgt. Edgar Fuentes, first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt. "Some Soldiers have never fought a day in their lives. So our combatives training will help them and all Soldiers develop confidence in their physical abilities and lead-

FIGHT cont. from Page 6



Cpl. Richard Lee (top) with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, spars with Pvt. Gabriel Vanessendelft with Btry. A, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt., during Deep Strike's level two combatives certification course. Thirteen Soldiers participated in the combatives training to become qualified level one instructors.

ership skills in a controlled environment. But most importantly, our program isn't designed to create fighters. We're preparing our Soldiers for combat, not the MMA."

The Soldiers also endure a rigorous PT session to mitigate potential risks to each other.

"Besides building up our Soldiers bodies, we need them tired," said Sgt. Nicholas Weisenberger, Tracy, Calif. native, Multiple Launch Rocket System section chief, Btry. A, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt. "We can't have the Soldiers going full strength with each other. By them being tired, they are forced to rely on techniques rather than strength."

Combatives like any other

specialized training is a perishable skill. The leadership wanted to increase the number of certified trainers in the battalion to help everyone become level one certified.

"For most of the Soldiers in the Army, the only time they will participate in combatives training is during basic training," said Pfc. Joshua Matthews, Middletown, N.J. native, Btry. B, 2nd Bat., 20th FA Regt. "I'm glad that I'm in a unit

where they take combatives serious. It's something everyone should know."

The Deep Strike level two combatives training course also includes a tactical portion where Soldiers run through room clearing scenarios, vehicle searches and extractions, handcuffing techniques, and weapon strikes; all in which the Soldiers will have to use certain techniques in order to subdue the threat.

"We want our program to be as real as possible and combat effective," said Weisenberger. "We train our guys to fight through their pain here, so they'll be ready to fight down-range. Just because something becomes uncomfortable to you doesn't mean it's something you should quit fighting for."

Through all the fighting and testing, the newly certified train-



Soldiers with Battery C, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery, subdues two hostiles during the Deep Strike level two combatives course certification training. The Soldiers were able to use hand-to-hand techniques taught to them to control the hostiles when weapons may not be practical.

ers will go back to their units to repeat what they learned throughout the last two weeks. The new trainers will start a new mission where they will continue to train everyone to

First Strike races against drugs

Story and photos by
Spc. Dalinda Hanna
41st Fires Brigade, PAO

KILLEEN, Texas—The roars of the engines and the cheers from the audience could be heard for miles as the patrons of the Texas Thunder Speedway celebrated its opening night. The driver of stock car number eight, Buck Owens, circled the track avoiding crashes and debris, Mar. 12.

The number eight car is special to the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment because painted on its trunk is the First Strike logo and the names of the First Strike Soldiers who helped get the car together and race ready.

Vernon 'Buck' Owens, a native of Cedar Park, Texas, and a retired Chief Warrant Officer, has been racing for 46 years, and chose First Strike because his son-in-law is in Btry. C, 1st Bat., 21st FA Regt., and his daughter is the family readiness group leader. Owens gives a lot of credit to the eight Soldiers who helped him get his car ready for racing and immortalized their names by painting them on the car.

"I enjoyed the Soldiers coming out to help me," said Owens. "I had a lot of good help from them and if it wasn't for them, we would not be out here and I would still be working on the car."

Owens raced Against 18

other stock cars and came in 10th place at the feature race. Owens drives for a not-for-profit group called Racing Against Drugs, which helps teach kids to stay on the track away from drugs. First Strike Soldiers wanted to volunteer for the organization to help Owens



Retired Chief Warrant Officer Vernon 'Buck' Owens, from Cedar Park, Texas, drives his stock car supporting Racing Against Drugs during opening night at Texas the Thunder Speedway. Eight Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, helped Owens get his car ready for the race and Owens painted the First Strike's crest on the trunk to show his support for the battalion.

spread the message.

Lt. Col. James Davel, originally from Shawano, Wis., and commander of 1st Bat., 21st FA Regt., 41st Fires Brigade, said that he is proud of the Soldiers for supporting the group and says that volunteering shows a lot about his Soldiers' character.

"Racing Against Drugs is a great program that not only benefits our Soldiers but the community, and we appreciate being asked to help support this outstanding cause," said Davel. "Our Soldiers were able to help this race team accomplish what they wanted to accomplish and a lot of good

came out of it. They have to be a part of the process in building and supporting the car, and Racing Against Drugs. These are good Soldiers that helped support the car and they understand the message the organization is trying to get across to the community."

Sgt. Jody Wheeler, from Syracuse, N.Y., and Multiple Launch Rocket System launcher chief for Btry. C, 1st Bat., 21st FA Regt., is the son-in-law of Owens and said that he enjoys working on the car with his father-in-law.

"I volunteered because I wanted to help support my father-in-law and Racing Against Drugs. I helped with the shocks, some body work and helped to

maintain the car after the races," said Wheeler. "I put the information about the car out throughout the brigade and received a great response from everyone about helping. We plan on racing every weekend and enjoy the support."

The Soldiers that volunteered were able to support a great cause and have fun in the process. Volunteering and organizational support by battalions shows a lot about Soldiers and about the brigade as a whole. First Strike Soldiers continue to support the community through various organizations and understand the importance of taking the time out to help others.

Throughout the Brigade



Rail Gunners



PROMOTIONS

To PV2

PV2 Hazy Deguzman

To PFC

PFC Ren Alexius
PFC Johnnie Anderson
PFC Brennan Axtell
PFC Clifford Cook
PFC Rudy Gastelum
PFC Dane Gruber
PFC David Kompass
PFC Rolando Manalili
PFC Ronald Manson
PFC Mark McElroy
PFC Dalton Pendleton
PFC John Sullivan
PFC James Williams

To SPC

SPC Joshua Alemeida
SPC Thomas Ard
SPC Bryce Honeycutt

To SGT

SGT Miguel Guajardo
SGT Cody Lindholm
SGT Ricky Odom
SGT John Scarver

To SSG

SSG Nicholas Smith

To CW2

CW2 Desmond Agee
CW2 Daniel Cadena

To 1LT

1LT Leo Butler



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